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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 12 TOKYO 000354

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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 02/12/08

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ASAHI (Online)  
February 11, 2008 (11:59)

Police in Okinawa Prefecture today arrested Tyrone Hadnott, 38, an Okinawa-based U.S. Marine Corps staff sergeant, on suspicion of raping a junior high school girl. The suspect has maintained that he just hugged the girl in the vehicle, the police said.

According to the investigation, Hadnott is suspected of raping the 14-year-old local schoolgirl inside a car parked on a street in the Okinawa prefectural town of Chatan around 10:35 p.m., Feb. 10.

Hadnott and the girl met in the city of Okinawa around 8:30 p.m. that day when she was with two of her friends, and she agreed to ride on his motorbike because the suspect told her that he would give her a ride home, the police said. However, the suspect took her to his house in the village of Kitanakagusuku, according to the police. After that, the suspect made her go into his car and drove to Chatan where he raped her in his car parked on a street, the police said.

After the girl left her friends, they were worried about her and called her cellphone before 10:00 p.m., the police said. They called an emergency call to the police after the girl replied "Help me!" and hung up the phone, according to the police. Around 10:45 p.m., the girl called her mother and said she had just run away. The police discovered the girl in the town of Chatan. The girl remembered what the car looked like, so the police identified Hadnott as the suspect.

Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima told reporters this morning, "I can never forgive this and feel strong indignation, considering the fact that it is a serious crime infringing on the human rights of women-and especially considering the fact that the victim is a junior high school student." The governor added, "I feel that this kind of incident must never take place again. It is extremely regrettable."

The Okinawa prefectural government will lodge a protest this afternoon with the U.S. consul general in Okinawa and will request the U.S. forces in Okinawa, the Defense Ministry's Okinawa bureau, and the Foreign Ministry's Okinawa office to prevent such an

incident from recurring.

2) U.S. serviceman rapes junior high school girl; Suspect arrested at Okinawa Police Station

OKINAWA TIMES EXTRA (Full)  
February 11, 2008

The Okinawa Police Station arrested on the morning of Feb. 11 Tyrone Hadnott, 38, a staff sergeant belonging to the U.S. Marines' Camp Courtney in the prefecture on suspicion of raping a 14-year-old junior high school girl in his car. Hadnott has denied raping the girl, saying he only forced her down and kissed her, the police said. Governor Hirokazu Nakaima indignantly said yesterday morning: "The incident infringing on human rights of women is unforgivable." Okinawa Mayor Mitsuko Tomon and others also condemned the incident. The governor's office chief Akira Uehara and prefectural chairman of the board of education Morikazu Nakamura filed a protest with the U.S. General in Naha yesterday afternoon.

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According to investigators, Hadnott is suspected of raping the schoolgirl inside a car parked on a street near a park in the central part of the main island of Okinawa around 10:30 p.m. on Feb. 10.

According to the police, Hadnott met the girl and two of her friends at Koza Music Town in Okinawa City around 8:20 p.m. and he offered the girl a ride home. But Hadnott instead took her to his house outside the base. Feeling scared, the girl ran away from his house, but Hadnott got her into his car after chasing her, drove around the central part of town and then raped her.

Worried, her friends called the girl's mobile phone and the girl replied "Help me" and hung up the phone. As a result, the friends, along with the girl's family members, reported the incident to the police.

After being raped, the girl was released a little before 11:00 p.m. Police officers found the girl near the park and took her into protective custody.

Because the girl remembered the suspect's house, his car and his looks, police officers asked Hadnott at his house to come voluntarily to the police station and arrested him on the spot.

Governor: "The incident is unforgivable."

Regarding the rape of a junior high school girl by a U.S. Marine, Governor Hirokazu Nakaima said yesterday morning: "I feel strong indignation against the crime and could never forgive it, considering the fact that the victim is a junior high school student. It is a serious crime infringing on human rights of woman. Every time a vicious rape incident involving U.S. serviceman occurred, we asked (the U.S. military) to take through measures to prevent a recurrence. It is extremely regrettable that an incident like this occurred despite that." Nakaima indicated that he would file a protest with the U.S. military and seek further measures. He was speaking to the press at the prefectural government office.

Nakaima, who was informed of the incident early yesterday morning, said: "It should not have happened. Every time an incident occurred, we pressed the U.S. military to take fundamental measures. It is extremely regrettable that yet another incident occurred. I would like to take appropriate measures in consideration of the victim and her family."

3) Yet another incident rocks Okinawa

OKINAWA TIMES EXTRA (Full)  
February 11, 2008

"I feel strong indignation"

Okinawa Mayor Mitsuko Tomon shortly after 10:00 a.m. on Feb. 11

visited the Okinawa Police Station, where the suspect is being detained, and received a briefing from deputy police chief Tokuori Shinya and others. Tomon said: "The incident shocked me. I would like to file protests with U.S. military organs and the Japanese government. The incident reminded me of the 1995 schoolgirl rape by U.S. servicemen. It is intolerable that a child with her whole life before her has become the victim of such an incident, and I feel strong indignation."

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U.S. military personnel must be monitored

Mayor Tsuneo Chinen of Uruma City, which hosts Camp Courtney, to which the suspect belongs, said angrily: "A terrible thing has occurred. Time and again, we have called for preventive measures, but the same thing has happened again. A responsible person must monitor the actions of U.S. servicemen. In order to prevent a recurrence, the city would like to consider countermeasures, such as filing a protest."

4) State Minister in Charge of Okinawa Kishida expresses strong indignation over allegation that U.S. Marine raped girl

ASAHI ONLINE NEWS  
February 11, 2008, 18:06 p.m.

In connection with the arrest of a U.S. Marine on suspicion of raping a junior high school girl in Okinawa, State Minister in Charge of Okinawa and Northern Territories Kishida told reporters in Tokyo yesterday: "I feel strong indignation over the incident, which should never have occurred."

As to whether it is necessary to take a second look at the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), Kishida said, "The first thing to do is to strengthen discipline among the military personnel and discuss measures to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents. Then, we must think whether there is need to take other action." When asked about the impact of the incident on the relocation plan for the U.S. Futenma Air Station, Kishida went no further than to say: "While listening fully to views of the Okinawa people, we want to deal specifically with the base relocation issue and the issue of reducing Okinawa's military burden."

5) Foreign Ministry asks U.S. side to take action to prevent recurrence of alleged raping of junior high school girl

ASAHI ONLINE NEWS  
February 11, 2008, 15:12 p.m.

A U.S. Marine was arrested on suspicion of raping a junior high school girl in Okinawa. In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MOFA) North American Affairs Bureau Director-General Shinichi Nishimiya on the morning of Feb. 11 conveyed his regret over the incident to Joseph Donovan, deputy chief of mission at the United States Embassy in Tokyo, by saying, "If the incident was caused by a U.S. soldier, it is extremely regrettable." And Nishimiya asked the U.S. side to strengthen discipline among the U.S. military personnel and prevent a recurrence of similar incidents. In response, Donovan was quoted as saying, "The U.S. is closely watching the investigation into the facts, and is taking this incident seriously. We will fully cooperate with the investigation by the Japanese authorities."

Later in the day, Ambassador in Charge of Okinawa Affairs Tadashi Imai conveyed his regret over the incident to Lt. General Richard Zilmer, commander of the U.S. Marine Corps in Japan. In response, Zilmer reportedly said he would cooperate on the investigation and strengthen discipline among the U.S. military personnel. The Japanese side made both requests over the phone to the U.S. side.

6) DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama on alleged raping of Okinawa girl

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by U.S. Marine: Government should reduce U.S. bases

YOMIURI ONLINE  
20:37, Feb. 11, 2008

Referring at a press conference on Feb. 11 in Mito City to the arrest of a U.S. Marine on suspicion of raping a junior-high schoolgirl in the town of Chatan, Okinawa Prefecture, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama said: "This kind of rape case has repeatedly occurred. I could not help thinking, not another one!"

Hatoyama added: "I would like the government to take a strong attitude toward the United States on the realignment of the U.S. forces in Japan and the reduction of U.S. bases." He continued: "Even if it takes years, shouldn't we immediately prepare the environment so that no more U.S. military bases would exist in Japan. The relationship between Japan and the U.S. should be made more equal."

7) In Iwakuni mayoral election, new face - backed by groups favoring U.S. aircraft transfer plan - defeats former mayor

ASAHI (Top Play) (Lead Paragraph)  
February 11, 2008

The question of whether to accept the plan of relocating carrier-based aircraft from the Naval Air Facility Atsugi in Kanagawa Prefecture to the Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi Prefecture was put to the local voters in the Iwakuni mayoral election yesterday. Yoshihiko Fukuda, 37, a former Liberal Democratic Party member, was elected for the first time in a good tight contest with former Mayor Katsusuke Ihara, 57, who strongly opposes the relocation plan. Fukuda was asked by pro-relocation groups to challenge Ihara. The relocation plan - as part of the realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan - has stalled since the fall in 2005. With Fukuda's election, the plan will certainly move forward now and is likely to be completed by 2014 as initially planned by the central government. The number of voters was 121,717, and voter turnout stood at 76.26 PERCENT (65.09 PERCENT in the previous mayoral election).

8) Iwakuni exit poll: 54 PERCENT favor relocation

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged)  
February 11, 2008

The city of Iwakuni in Yamaguchi Prefecture elected a new mayor yesterday. According to an exit poll conducted by the Yomiuri Shimbun, more than half of Iwakuni voters were in favor of redeploying carrier-borne fighter jets to the U.S. Marine Corps' Iwakuni base in line with the planned realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. The poll shows that the stance of opposing the redeployment of carrier-borne aircraft will only stagnate the city's municipal administration. This attitude seems to have boosted Yoshihiko Fukuda, who was a House of Representatives member of the Liberal Democratic Party and is flexible about the transferal of U.S. jets to the base.

In the survey, respondents were asked if they supported an agreement reached between Japan and the United States on the plan to redeploy U.S. carrier-borne aircraft to Iwakuni. To this question, "yes"

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accounted for 13 PERCENT, with "conditionally yes" (if the plan is revised to reflect local views) and "no" accounting for 41 PERCENT each. "Yes" and "conditionally yes" totaled 54 PERCENT.

Among those who answered "yes," 80 PERCENT voted for Fukuda. Among those conditionally affirmative, a little over 70 PERCENT voted for Fukuda. Among those negative, a little less than 90 PERCENT cast their votes for former Mayor Katsusuke Ihara.

The survey was conducted at polling stations in the city of Iwakuni with voters. Answers were obtained from 903 persons.

9) Lingering sorrow and pain seven years after Ehime Maru incident

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 21) (Full)  
February 12, 2008

It was seven years on Feb. 10 since nine of the 35 crewmembers of Ehime Prefectural Uwajima Fishery High School's training ship Ehime Maru died when the ship sunk after being struck by a U.S. nuclear submarine in February 2001 offshore Hawaii. The high school held a ceremony commemorating the victims and maritime safety.

About 340 people -- the families of the victims, those who were on the training ship at the time of the incident and were rescued, all the school students and teachers -- prayed silently in the school's gymnasium at 08:43 a.m. (01:43 p.m. on Feb. 9, local time) while ringing the bell that was recovered from the sunken training ship.

High School Principal Haruki Tamai offered a speech, in which he said: "Our anger over the incident will never heal. I strongly feel that we should not ease up in our determination that similar incidents must be avoided."

Four members of the school council, including Hideaki Suzuki, a 16 year-old, revealed a report on the Ehime Maru incident they compiled. A local chorus sang the song "Sea of Hope" produced by composer Shigeaki Saegusa.

Each attendant offered a white chrysanthemum at the monument erected near the main school gate. Yoshiharu Tanioka, 17, president of the school council, said: "I want to realize my dream of engaging in the fisheries industry, continuing the enthusiasm of the nine victims. Some of the family members of the victims offered silent prayers at a park in Honolulu.

10) Government to extend U.S. force realignment subsidies to Nago based on early start of Futenma assessment

ASAHI (Page 1) (Abridged)  
February 9, 2008

The government decided on Feb. 8 to provide U.S. force realignment subsidies to the city of Nago, the relocation site for the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, on the assumption that the government will start an environmental impact assessment at an early time. Nago, which has been opposed to the relocation plan, has not been on the government's list of subsidies. The government has shifted its policy in an effort to elicit the city's cooperation for the relocation plan. With the prefectural and Nago municipal governments expected to show understanding for an early start of the environmental assessment, the government is likely to provide

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subsidies within the current fiscal year.

The Defense Ministry's assessment, intended to study the possible impact on the ecosystem of the base relocation, is an indispensable process for realizing the relocation.

Under the U.S. Force Realignment Special Measures Law, the government is allowed to extend subsidies to local governments that are recognized to be contributing to the smooth and steady implementation of U.S. force realignment. The government has earmarked in the current fiscal year a total of 4.6 billion yen to 36 local governments that have announced their acceptance of additional burdens resulting from U.S. force realignment. In addition to Nago, Iwakuni in Yamaguchi Prefecture and Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture, which are opposed to relocation plans, have not been on the government's list of cities receiving subsidies.

But in Okinawa, there has appeared a mood to search for common ground with the central government regarding the Futenma relocation issue, as seen in Governor Hirokazu Nakaima's comment, "I have high hopes for the Fukuda administration, which places high priority on dialogue."

For this reason, the government has concluded that the provision of

subsidies will help push the planned assessment forward and obtain local understanding.

The Defense Ministry has conveyed its desire to start the assessment within this month to the Okinawa government.

11) U.S. Secretary of State Rice to hold talks in Tokyo with Prime Minister Fukuda probably on Feb. 26

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)  
February 9, 2008

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to visit Japan on the way home from Seoul where she will attend the South Korean presidential inauguration to take place for Lee Myung Bak on Feb. 25. Coordination is under way for a meeting on the 26th between Rice and Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda.

According to Japan-U.S. diplomatic sources, the Prime Minister and U.S. Secretary of State will discuss the war against global warming, economic issues and Africa development, which are expected to become main topics at the July Group of Eight summit at Lake Toya in Hokkaido. They are also expected to exchange views on an early resumption of the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear ambition, as well as a new framework of cooperation between Japan, the United States and South Korea, with the aim of stabilizing East Asia.

The expectation is that the state of realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, including the relocation of U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station will become a topic of discussion between Fukuda and Rice. Fukuda will likely explain Japan's resumption of its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean based on the new antiterrorism measures law in a bid to play up of the unity of Japan-U.S. alliance.

12) President-elect Lee reveals plan to hold Japan-ROK summit soon

ASAHI Com (Excerpt)  
February 11, 2008

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A suprapartisan group composed of representatives of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the New Komeito, and the Social Democratic Party met ROK President-elect Lee Myung Bak in Seoul on Feb. 11. The delegation includes Koichi Kato and Taku Yamasaki, both of whom served as LDP secretary general, and former DPJ Policy Research Council Chairman Yoshito Sengoku. In reference to the presidential inauguration scheduled for Feb. 25, Lee said: "World leaders will be attending the ceremony. I am planning to hold a Japan-South Korea summit first." He thus revealed he would meet Prime Minister Fukuda around the 25th.

13) Japan provided 130 million yen from its ODA to PRT in Afghanistan for construction of schools

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)  
February 10, 2008

Shinya Minamijima

The Japanese government was found to have provided money from its official development assistance (ODA) budget to projects promoted by the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), a group that consists of military personnel and civilians and that engages in reconstruction of Afghanistan. The projects include construction of schools. Foreign Minister Koumura, who is to arrive in Munich, Germany, in Feb. 9, intends to appeal to ministers from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members about this assistance by Japan to the PRT as Japan's contribution to (the reconstruction of Afghanistan). But there is an indication that this aid may lead to the danger that Japanese aid organizations that operate in Afghanistan in the way unrelated to the PRT will be attacked by anti-government forces.

According to an informed government source, the Japanese government has installed a liaison official in the NATO's civilian

representative office in Kabul and undertaken coordination with each country's troops participating in the PRT in order to facilitate fund cooperation.

When it came to what projects Japan financed, Japan financed civilian aid projects advanced by the PRT that was under the control of the Lithuanian troops, which are based in Afghanistan's Ghowr Province, where reconstruction falls behind, and the Estonian troops and the U.S. troops. Japan financed the projects on the condition that aid money be used for education, vocational training, and medical services only. The amount of money Japan has provided so far totaled 130 million yen, which covered 13 projects, such as the construction of elementary and junior high schools for literacy education.

Each country's military found out necessary projects and asked for Japan's financial aid through nongovernmental organizations in Afghanistan and other countries. The Japanese government financed some projects. Reportedly, each country's military engages in the job of finding out necessary projects for ODA but they also engage in the job of inspecting progress on each project. The Japanese and Afghan governments exchanged notes on this cooperation.

For this aid, Japan used "grass-roots human security grant aid cooperation" targeted for small projects directly linked to civilian aid under ODA. ODA is required to be used for nonmilitary

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assistance. But a government official noted that even in the case of rendering cooperation to the PRT, Japan can provide aid to it if the aid is for civilian purposes and said: "Japan's aid has been highly appreciated by local people and NATO."

Although Japan's cooperation toward the PRT has been limited in the financial area, some among Japanese NGOs expressed concern that Japanese NGOs, which operate in the region without receiving any protection from other countries' troops, may be mistakenly taken as the groups linked to those troops and become the target of attack by anti-government forces.

14) Government eyes dispatch of Japan Coast Guard personnel to East Timor, aiming to underscore Japan's eagerness for PKO cooperation

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)  
February 9, 2008

The government yesterday started looking into dispatching Japan Coast Guard (JCG) personnel to East Timor to participate in the United Nations' ongoing peacekeeping operations (PKO) in East Timor. If the plan is realized, the JCG will send its personnel to a PKO for the first time. Under the plan, the dispatched personnel will engage in providing guidance and advice to enhance the capabilities of the local maritime police section, based on the PKO Cooperation Law. The government aims to underscore Japan's eagerness for PKO cooperation, as advocated by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda.

The government plans to dispatch several JCG members to have them join the UN Integrated Mission in Timor (UNMIT) as civilian police officers. It will soon send a survey team to explore the best timing for dispatching JCG members. Their main mission will be to help the local maritime policy section enhance its abilities to stop the inflow of narcotics and illegal operations by fishing boats.

Japan has dispatched more than 50 personnel to PKOs across the world. This figure is too small, compared with 1,820 persons being sent by China (as of last November) and 9,343 by India (the same). Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura said: "Japan's presence is too thin."

The government's decision stems from the judgment that activities in East Timor will involve little risk. The PKO in Sudan has drawn much attention in the international community, but the government is negative about sending personnel, focusing on security and other problems there. Japan has dispatched personnel to East Timor since the UN launched a PKO there in 1999. The two civilian police officers sent last year returned to Japan on Feb. 5.



Some JCG officials suggest that giving training to naval policemen from East Timor in Japan would produce better results. But the Prime Minister's Office insists that if activities are outside the framework of the PKO, Japan will be unable to demonstrate its eagerness to cooperate on peacekeeping.

East Timor has abundant natural resources. Japanese firms have also taken part in gas field development projects in the nation. Also because East Timor is expected to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a senior Foreign Ministry official said: "It is strategically significant for Japan to strengthen ties with East Timor through personnel support."

TOKYO 00000354 010 OF 012

By studying the possibility of dispatching JCG personnel, the government is also aiming to pave the way for enacting new permanent legislation for dispatching Self-Defense Force troops overseas. The prime minister has expressed his eagerness for new permanent legislation. The LDP has also decided to set up a joint study group to look into permanent legislation on the 13th.

Given that Japan has sent only 50 officials overseas, critics may pose questions about whether a permanent law is really necessary. For the government, the planned dispatch of personnel to East Timor will be a good means to produce results.

15) Expanded use of weapons under permanent law on dispatch of SDF personnel abroad to be considered, according to Taku Yamasaki of LDP

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
February 11, 2008

Seoul, Masakazu Hamasuna

Former Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Taku Yamasaki met in Seoul with reporters accompanying him on his visit to South Korea. Referring to a permanent law stipulating the desired form of the overseas dispatch of Self-Defense Forces' personnel, Yamasaki noted that the ruling parties' project team would launch discussions this month. He then indicated his party's intention to look into the possibility of easing the standards for the use of weapons, saying, "Whether it is possible to expand the scope of the use of weapons within the scope of the possible interpretation of the Constitution will also become subject to discussion."

16) "China's military buildup is giving rise to regional concern," says Foreign Minister Koumura in speech given at International Security Conference

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
February 11, 2008

Munich, Hiroo Matsunaga

Foreign Minister Koumura, now visiting Germany, took part in the Munich Conference on Security Policy, an international symposium, and gave a speech around noon on Feb. 10. Regarding China's military modernization, he warned, "It lacks transparency." He also underscored the rapidly improving bilateral relations to the international community.

This is the first time for a Japanese cabinet minister to give a speech at the conference, which brought together members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), starting with the U.S., China, India and Russia. In giving the speech, Koumura gave priority to explaining matters concerning China in order to respond to growing interest in that nation in Europe and the U.S.

Koumura stressed that for the stability and prosperity of Asia, it is necessary to enhance transparency through confidence-building in the political and military areas and reduce risks that could lead to destabilization." Concerning China's continuing military buildup, he pointed out, "There are some aspects that lack transparency. China

needs to provide more detailed accounts. If the situation is left unattended, it could increase regional concern."

TOKYO 00000354 011 OF 012

Koumura presumably stressed that point in order to call on the European Union (EU) to continue its weapons embargo against China.

Koumura played up friendly Japan-China relations, noting, "The two countries now share common responsibility for the stability of Asian and the world. They are tackling to build a mutually-beneficial strategic relationship." Part of his aim in giving such a speech was to wipe away the vivid memory still retained by European countries that Japan-China relations worsened during the Koizumi administration, as a senior Foreign Ministry official explained. The foreign minister also stressed, "If Japan widens its activities in Asia, the value of the Japan-U.S. alliance will increase, leading to further strengthening the bilateral alliance."

17) Russia denies alleged intrusion of its aircraft into Japanese airspace; Japan demands reinvestigation

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
February 12, 2008

Munich, Hiroo Matsunaga

Foreign Minister Koumura on the evening of Feb. 9 (early hours of Feb. 10, Japan time) met with Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Ivanov at a Munich hotel. They agreed to launch bilateral government-level talks to discuss Japan purchasing some of Russia's greenhouse gas emissions quotas. The first meeting will be held in Tokyo on Feb. 27. Concerning the issue of the alleged intrusion of a Russian bomber into Japanese airspace off the southern part of the Izu Island chain, Ivanov said, "We investigated the matter, and found that there was no intrusion."

In response, Koumura demanded, "SDF fighter jets, which were scrambled to deal with the intrusion, confirmed the incident. We would like you to reinvestigate the matter properly." Ivanov pledged to do so.

Regarding the Northern Territories issue, Ivanov said that the 1956 Japan-USSR joint statement stipulating the return of the Habomai islets and Shikotan is the closest to a settlement of the issue among various attempts. He thus indicated Russia's stance that a settlement should be reached based on that statement.

Koumura pointed out that it is important to sign a peace treaty, by settling the ownership of the four Northern Territories, including the Kunashiri Islands and the Etorofu as well, noting, "It is necessary to understand that the statement is not a peace treaty."

18) Support for Fukuda cabinet down to 35 PERCENT

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Abridged)  
February 11, 2008

The approval rating for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and his cabinet was 35.6 PERCENT in a public opinion survey conducted for the month by Kyodo News on Feb. 9-10. The figure showed a drop of 5.8 percentage points from January's survey, in which the Fukuda cabinet's support rate had rebounded. The figure is the second lowest, following the 35.3 PERCENT rating in December last year, since his cabinet came into office. The disapproval rating for the Fukuda cabinet was 44.5 PERCENT, up 1.7 points.

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Those who do not support the Fukuda cabinet were asked why. In response, 26.1 PERCENT said "the prime minister lacks leadership ability," up 6.5 points from the last survey. This topped all other reasons for the first time. Among other reasons, "nothing can be expected of his economic policy" accounted for 22.8 PERCENT. In the

breakdown of reasons for supporting the Fukuda cabinet, "there's no other appropriate person" topped all other reasons at 50.0 PERCENT .

What lies behind these figures seems to be public concern about the Fukuda cabinet's response to the economic situation, including lower stock prices, in addition to the recent occurrence of food-poisoning incidents involving Chinese-made frozen "gyoza" dumplings. The survey shows the public's severe eye on the prime minister's political steering.

19) DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama supports idea of President Ozawa remaining in office

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)  
February 9, 2008

Speaking at a press conference on Feb. 8 of the party leadership race in September, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama revealed his position of supporting

SIPDIS  
the idea of current DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa staying on in the post. He said: "I want President Ozawa to run in the race. Under his leadership, our party should take over the reins of government."

Hatoyama also suggested that an uncontested election be avoided. He stated: "I wonder whether the election should be a vote of confidence. Another way of holding an election is that candidates present their manifesto and conduct the election."

DONOVAN